

(12) INTERNATIONAL APPLICATION PUBLISHED UNDER THE PATENT COOPERATION TREATY (PCT)

(19) World Intellectual Property Organization
International Bureau



(43) International Publication Date
8 August 2002 (08.08.2002)

PCT

(10) International Publication Number
WO 02/061470 A1

(51) International Patent Classification⁷: **G02B 5/30**,
B42D 15/00, G06K 19/06, G02F 1/1334

JOHNSON, Graham, A. [GB/CH]; Bierastrasse 39,
CH-4103 Bottmingen (CH).

(21) International Application Number: PCT/CH02/00043

(74) Agent: **LIEBETANZ, Michael**; Isler & Pedrazzini AG,
Postfach 6940, CH-8023 Zürich (CH).

(22) International Filing Date: 28 January 2002 (28.01.2002)

(81) Designated States (*national*): AE, AG, AL, AM, AT (utility model), AU, AZ, BA, BB, BG, BR, BY, BZ, CA, CH, CN, CO, CR, CU, CZ (utility model), DE (utility model), DK (utility model), DM, DZ, EC, EE (utility model), ES, FI (utility model), GB, GD, GE, GH, GM, HR, HU, ID, IL, IN, IS, JP, KE, KG, KP, KR, KZ, LC, LK, LR, LS, LT, LU, LV, MA, MD, MG, MK, MN, MW, MX, MZ, NO, NZ, OM, PH, PL, PT, RO, RU, SD, SE, SG, SI, SK (utility model), SL, TJ, TM, TN, TR, TT, TZ, UA, UG, US, UZ, VN, YU, ZA, ZM, ZW.

(25) Filing Language: English

(26) Publication Language: English

(30) Priority Data:
01810082.6 29 January 2001 (29.01.2001) EP

(71) Applicant (*for all designated States except US*): **ROLIC AG** [CH/CH]; Chamerstrasse 50, CH-6301 Zug (CH).

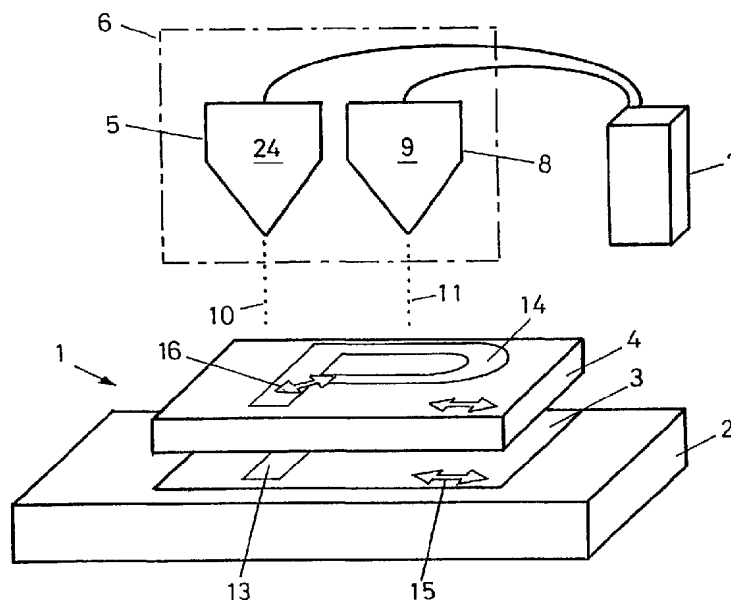
(84) Designated States (*regional*): ARIPO patent (GH, GM, KE, LS, MW, MZ, SD, SL, SZ, TZ, UG, ZM, ZW), Eurasian patent (AM, AZ, BY, KG, KZ, MD, RU, TJ, TM), European patent (AT, BE, CH, CY, DE, DK, ES, FI, FR, GB, GR, IE, IT, LU, MC, NL, PT, SE, TR), OAPI patent

(72) Inventors; and

(75) Inventors/Applicants (*for US only*): **MOIA, Franco** [IT/CH]; Eggstrasse 24A, CH-4402 Frenkendorf (CH).

[Continued on next page]

(54) Title: OPTICAL DEVICE AND METHOD FOR MANUFACTURING SAME



(57) Abstract: A method for manufacturing a structured optical device (1) starts with a substrate (2), on which is coated an alignment layer (3) and a liquid crystal polymer network layer (4). One of these layers can be created as a coating using a conventional technique. The other layer, either in a first step the alignment layer or in a second step the liquid crystal polymer network layer, is jet printed. The invention advantageously enables the making of a patterned liquid crystal polymer network which can be personalized upon manufacturing.



WO 02/061470 A1



(BF, BJ, CF, CG, CI, CM, GA, GN, GQ, GW, ML, MR, NE, SN, TD, TG).

For two-letter codes and other abbreviations, refer to the "Guidance Notes on Codes and Abbreviations" appearing at the beginning of each regular issue of the PCT Gazette.

Published:

— *with international search report*

Optical device and method for manufacturing same

The invention relates to a method for manufacturing a liquid
5 crystal polymer network and an optical device manufactured according to the method.

Such optical devices are usually based on birefringent layers
formed from cross-linked Liquid Crystal Polymers (LCP).
10 Generally, all kind of LCP materials are possible, for instance
apart from nematic materials also materials with different
mesophases (such as cholesteric LCPs) or containing guest
molecules (such as dichroic LCPs). For the alignment of the LCP
prior and during the cross-linking, alignment layers are used. A
15 well-suited kind of alignment layers are photo-orientable
Linearly Photopolymerisable Polymers (LPP). Backgrounds and
manufacturing of such LPP/LCP devices are disclosed in, for
example, US-A-5,389,698, US-A-5,602,661, EP-A-0 689 084, EP-A-
0 689 065, WO 98/52077, WO 00/29878.

20 Conventional coating techniques such as spin-coating, slot-
coating, meniscus-coating, bar-coating allow essentially a
centralized mass production of optical structured devices based
on the LPP/LCP technology.

25 However, using these coating techniques it is not possible to
provide a practicable method for the manufacturing of
personalized optical structured devices, i.e. the production in
small quantities or as single items with an each time varying
30 pattern structure, especially if the manufacturing in addition
should be decentralized. Moreover, with these conventional
coating techniques it is practically not possible to build up
stacks of layers with a pattern structure of different
alignments combined with topographically variations of the layer

thickness - especially not for microscopic dimensions in the ranges below 300 micrometers.

A method according to the invention uses the characterizing features of claim 1 or claim 3. An optical device manufactured according to one of these methods is claimed in claim 17, and an optical security device manufactured according to one of these methods is claimed in claim 18. With the teaching of the invention it is advantageously possible to create single and personalized optical devices, especially security devices, in an easy to use and comparatively economical manner.

The method for manufacturing a structured optical device starts with a substrate, which is, at least in certain areas, prepared as an alignment layer for liquid crystals, on which is coated, again at least in certain areas, a layer comprising a cross-linkable liquid crystal material. One of these layers can be created as a coating using a conventional technique. The other layer, either in a first step the alignment layer or in a second step the layer comprising a cross-linkable liquid crystal material, is jet printed in order to create a patterned liquid crystal polymer network.

According to one preferred embodiment of the invention a patterned optical device is manufactured based on mono-axial aligned layers such as rubbed polyimide layers or mono-axially photo-oriented LPP layers which orient jet printed LCP layers according to the direction given by said alignment layers.

According to another embodiment of the invention a patterned optical device is manufactured based on one jet printed photo-oriented LPP layers which orient later applied LCP layers according to the direction given by said alignment layers.

These optical devices can be applied, among others, in the fields of document security, such as passports, identification cards (ID cards), driver licenses or special certificates, etc. 5 against falsification or alteration; however, the invention is not limited to such field.

It is advantageous that these devices can be manufactured with a jet printing technique. A jet printing technique can e.g. be 10 based on piezo jet printing or bubble jet printing. Especially, it is possible to use "ink-jet" printing techniques, largely used e.g. in today's computer print-outputs.

These and other objects, features and advantages of the 15 invention will become more apparent in light of the following detailed description of embodiments thereof, as illustrated in the accompanying drawings, in which:

Fig. 1 is a schematic view of an LPP/LCP device made by jet- 20 printing;

Fig. 2 is a schematic view of a reflective LPP/LCP device according to Fig. 1 with an appropriate inspection tool (polarizer) for viewing the information, here the character "P";

25 Fig. 3a and 3b are schematic views of a modified form of the device shown in Fig. 2; the device depicted in Fig. 3 is described in the first embodiment;

Fig. 4a and 4b are schematic views of the preferred device described in the second embodiment;

30 Fig. 5a and 5b are schematic views of the preferred device described in the third embodiment;

Fig. 6a and 6b are schematic views of the preferred device described in the fourth embodiment;

Fig. 7 is a plan view of a more complex LPP/LCP device described in the fifth embodiment;

Fig. 8 is a plan view of a more complex LPP/LCP device including not only LPP/LCP retarder layers but also a cholesteric filter and a dichroic LCP layer; this device is described in the sixth embodiment;

Fig. 9 is a schematic drawing of the process flow of the decentralized manufacturing of personalized optical security LPP/LCP devices through jet-printing;

Fig. 10 is a schematic drawing of the process of decentralized manufacturing of personalized optical security devices including an LCP layer through jet-printing based on an optical security device described in the fourth embodiment.

Fig. 1 is a schematic view of a structured LPP/LCP device 1 made by jet-printing. Such a device may for instance be used as a security device. The process is started with a substrate 2 onto which an alignment layer 3 is coated. The substrate 2 material can be for example plastic (e.g. polypropylene), the first alignment layer 3 may be an LPP layer. The linearly photopolymerisable polymers (LPP) are initially contained in a solution 24 which is stocked in a first container 5 being part of a cartridges and printing unit 6 of an ink-jet printer. Examples for such ink-jet printers are disclosed in, for example, US-A-3,988,745, US-A-4,385,304, US-A-4,392,145, US-A-3,747,120, US-A-3,832,579, US-A-3,683,212, US-A-3,708,798, US-A-4,660,058 and US-A-5,754,198.

Line 10 shows schematically the droplets coating the substrate 2 and forming the alignment layer 3. After curing the first dried LPP layer 3, the same solution 24 is used to form a second alignment layer 13, in this example shown in the form of the

character "P" and having a different direction of orientation, e.g. with an different orientation indicated by the arrows 15 and 16.

5 Reference numeral 7 shows the control unit of the printer connected to the first container 5 and to a second container 8. The second container is filled with an LCP solution 9. Line 11 shows schematically the droplets coating the alignment layer 3 and forming the LCP layer 4 and 14.

10

Further explanations will be given with reference to Fig. 2 showing schematically an image 20 or 21 of such an LPP/LCP device made with jet-printing. Same references always depict same features in the different Figures. Device 1 is a reflective
15 LPP/LCP device according to Fig. 1 wherein the substrate 2 comprises a reflector (not explicitly shown). References 25 or 26 indicate an appropriate inspection tool, here a polarizer, for viewing the information, here the character "P". The polarizer 25 is orientated parallel to the orientation 15 of the
20 alignment layer 3 / LCP layer 4. The polarizer 26 is orientated parallel to the orientation 16 of the alignment layer 13 / LCP layer 14. Therefore, polarizer 25 creates the image 20 of a dark "P" and polarizer 26 creates the image 21 of a bright "P" surrounded with a dark zone.

25

The present invention describes a new technique of making LCP devices, which is based on jet printing. It advantageously allows the decentralized manufacturing of personalized such devices in a reliable and cost-effective manner. A specific flow
30 diagram illustrating the decentralized manufacturing is depicted in Fig. 9. An example of a corresponding equipment is shown schematically in Fig. 10.

The personalization of optically structured security devices is an objective which particularly the document security manufacturers and users are asking for. Further, the combination of the decentralized manufacturing process together with the
5 personalization of such optical security devices or other LCP and LPP/LCP devices not only opens possibilities in the field of document security but allows also to build up a plethora of other applications using different optical effects. The jet printing technique used may be 'drop on demand' methods or
10 'continues beam' methods.

The process flow of Fig. 9 shows a possible way of making in a decentralized equipment personalized optically structured devices for e.g. document security, i.e. to protect e.g.
15 passports, identification cards, driver licenses or special certificates etc. against falsification or alteration. The personal data or other personal information as photographs are stored on a computer in a data base file 100. The data is transferred to the manufacturing equipment 110. It is possible
20 and preferable to provide encoder means 102, encoding the data from the data base file 100, especially images or information for security documents such as passports, ID documents and others, through a security software before passing the information to the manufacturing equipment 110 to ensure that
25 the optical device can be perused only with a suitable decrypting tool.

Manufacturing equipment 110 comprises cartridges 112 as shown in Fig. 1, containing suitable coating materials, e.g. the
30 materials mentioned in the different embodiments in this description, and means 120 to perform jet printing of materials, drying same and cross-linking LCP layers if applicable with light, especially isotropic UV light. The simplicity of means 120 supports the possibility of decentralized production.

In a variation of the invention, it is possible to start with a substrate, e.g. self-adhesive labels, already bearing an alignment layer that was made in advance. In this case, the alignment layer may be of any kind (rubbed polyimide or LPP or others), and the personalized pattern structure is produced by suitably jet printing the LCP material.

Means 120 include printer means to operate the jet printer heads or cartridges which containing the LPP and LCP materials. Each single printer head will jet-print one specific material. In case of e.g. a four-head printer, four different materials may be jet-printed: e.g. the first head jet-prints a photo-orientable LPP material, the second head prints a LCP material, the third head prints a LCP material containing dichroic dyes, and the fourth head prints a cholesteric LCP material. Appropriate software will control the printing process.

The product 130 resulting from this method is a fully personalized optical security LCP device, ready to be applied. It can be used to produce security products 132 as passports, ID documents and others.

Fig. 10 shows one example of an apparatus for manufacturing optical structured elements such as those described in embodiment 4. The apparatus consists essentially of a jet-printing head 200 and an isotropic UV lamp 210. A computer 100 controls the printing process onto e.g. sheets containing label substrates 2. The labels on the substrates 2 were previously coated with an alignment layer 3 (e.g. photo-aligned LPP or rubbed polyimide). The jet-printed LCP layer 4 forms a personalized pattern which - after a drying process through the heated cylinder 220 - is finally cross-linked by the isotropic

UV light under an inert atmosphere (e.g. under a nitrogen atmosphere). The UV light is generated by the isotropic UV lamp 210 comprising a reflector 211. This leads to a solid-state plastic film. The labels which contain the personalized optical security device may then be transferred to e.g. a passport or to other documents.

Fig. 3 shows schematically the set-up of a first embodiment of an optical device 1 according to the invention. Fig. 3a shows the order of the layers wherein Fig. 3b is an exploded view of Fig. 3a. The first LPP layer 3 is jet-printed on a substrate 2. The substrate material can be for example plastic (e.g. polypropylene) or paper, preferably specially treated paper such that the paper surface is smooth and compatible with the LPP or LCP (including dichroic LCP and cholesteric LCP) solutions (e.g. paper coated with a polyethylene layer). After the drying process the first alignment layer 3 is then exposed to linear polarized UV light as described below (the polarization direction 15 is say parallel to the long edge of the substrate 2 according to Fig. 3). Then, a second LPP layer 23 is jet-printed on top of the first LPP layer 3 having a different shape compared to the first alignment layer 3. In Fig. 3 the second LPP layer 23 has the shape of the character "P". After the drying process the second alignment layer 23 is then exposed to linear polarized UV light as described below (with a polarization direction 16 that is, for example, 45 degrees to the long edge of the substrate 2 according to Fig. 3).

This procedure leads to an alignment area which shows two different alignment capabilities: the area of first alignment layer 3 not covered by second alignment layer 23 has an alignment capability along the long edge of the substrate (direction 15 in Fig. 3), and the area of second alignment layer

23 (with the shape of "P") has an alignment capability of 45 degrees to first alignment layer 3 (direction 16 in Fig. 3).

In the next step, a LCP material is jet-printed as a layer 4 onto both alignment layers 3 and 23. When the solvent of the LCP material evaporates from the LCP solution, the liquid crystal molecules align according to the alignment information of the two LPP layers 3 and 23. A cross-linkage as described below forms then a solid state plastic film. This terminates the manufacturing process of the optical structured LPP/LCP device 1.

The information (here the character "P") can be visualized with one or two linear polarizer(s), one polarizer for reflective devices, two polarizers for transmissive devices. By rotating the polarizer or the device 1, the image changes from positive to negative.

Fig. 4 shows schematically the set-up of a second embodiment of a device 31 according to the invention. Fig. 4a shows the order of the layers wherein Fig. 4b is an exploded view of Fig. 4a. The substrate 2 is already coated with a previously manufactured first alignment layer 33 having an alignment direction 15 along the long edge of the substrate in Fig. 4. The substrate 2 material can be chosen as in the first embodiment. It is possible that the first alignment layer 33 covers a definite area as shown in Fig. 4 or the first alignment layer 33 covers the whole substrate 2.

A second LPP layer 23 is jet-printed on top of the first alignment layer 33 having a different shape compared to the latter layer. In Fig. 4 the second LPP layer 23 has the shape of the character "P". After a drying process, the second layer 23

is then exposed to linear polarized UV light as described below (the polarization direction 16 is say 45 degrees to the long edge of the substrate 2 according to Fig. 4). This procedure leads to a an alignment area which shows - as in the case of the first embodiment - two different alignment capabilities: the area resulting from the first alignment layer 33 not covered by the second alignment layer 23 has an alignment capability along the long edge of the substrate 2 (Fig. 4), and the second LPP layer 23 (having the shape of "P") has an alignment capability 45 degrees to first alignment layer 33.

In the next step the LCP material is jet-printed as a layer 4 onto first alignment layer 33 and second LPP layer 23. When the solvent is evaporated from the LCP solution, the liquid crystal molecules 4 align according to the alignment information 15 and 16 of the two LPP layers 33 and 23, respectively. A cross-linkage as described below forms then a solid state plastic film. This terminates the manufacturing process of the optical structured LPP/LCP device 31. The information (here the character "P") can be visualized with one or two linear polarizer(s), one polarizer for reflective devices, two polarizers for transmissive devices. By rotating the polarizer or the device the image changes from positive to negative.

Fig. 5 shows schematically the set-up of a third embodiment of a device 41 according to the invention. Fig. 5a shows the order of the layers wherein Fig. 5b is an exploded view of Fig. 5a. A single LPP layer 23 is jet-printed on a substrate 2 and forms a pattern such as a picture, a graphic, or one or several alphanumeric characters. In Fig. 5 the jet-printed LPP area forms e.g. the character "P". The substrate material can be chosen as in the first embodiment. After the drying process, the substrate including the LPP area 23 is then exposed to linear polarized UV

light as described below (the polarization direction 16 is say 45° to the long edge of the substrate 2 according to Fig. 5). This procedure leads to a an area which shows two different alignment characteristics: the section resulting from the jet-printed LPP area 23 (LPP layer 23 described in the third embodiment has the shape of 'P') has an alignment capability of 45° to the long edge of the substrate (Fig. 5), the remaining area has no alignment information.

10 In the next step, the LCP material is jet-printed as a layer 4 onto the alignment layer 23 and also onto the remaining area of the substrate 2 according to Fig. 5. This specific area forms the LCP layer 4 shown in Fig. 5. When the solvent is evaporated from the LCP solution, the liquid crystal molecules on top of 15 the LPP layer 23 align according to the alignment information 16 of the LPP layer 23. The remaining LCP area shows isotropic alignment. A cross-linkage as described below forms then a solid state plastic film. This terminates the manufacturing process of the optical structured LPP/LCP device 41. The information (the 20 character "P") can be visualized with one or two linear polarizer(s), one polarizer for reflective devices, two polarizers for transmissive devices. By rotating the device, the image changes - depending on the orientation of the polarizer - from positive to invisible or from negative to invisible 25 depending on the acting mode which can be reflective or transmissible.

Fig. 6 shows schematically the set-up of a fourth embodiment of a device 51 according to the invention. Fig. 6a shows the order 30 of the layers and Fig. 6b is an exploded view of Fig. 6a. In a first step an alignment layer 33 was applied to the substrate 2. The alignment layer may consist of a photo-orientable material such as an LPP material or of another alignment material such as

rubbed polyimide or any other film or surface which is able to align liquid crystal molecules. The sole alignment layer 33 may be mono-axial as indicated in Fig. 6, but designs with more than one aligning direction are also possible. The substrate material
5 can be chosen as in the first embodiment. The manufacturing of the alignment layer 33 can be done in advance and in a different place, that is, the substrates 2 including the alignment layer 33 may be pre-manufactured.

10 Then an LCP solution is jet-printed as a layer 54 onto that alignment layer 33 and forms a kind of information such as a picture, a graphical pattern, or one or several alpha-numeric characters. In Fig. 6 the shape of the jet-printed LCP area 54 forms the character "P". When the solvent is evaporated from the
15 LCP solution, the liquid crystal molecules on top of the alignment layer 33 align according to the alignment information 15 of said alignment layer 33. On the remaining alignment area no LCP is present. A cross-linkage as described below forms then a solid state plastic film. This terminates the manufacturing
20 process of the optical structured device 51. The information (here the character "P") can be visualized with one or two linear polarizer(s), one polarizer for reflective devices, two polarizers for transmissive devices. By rotating the device the image changes - depending on the orientation of the polarizer -
25 from positive to invisible or from negative to invisible depending on the acting mode.

Fig. 7 shows schematically the set-up of a fifth embodiment of a device 61 according to the invention which consists of a
30 topographically complex orientation pattern including one (66) or several (67) LPP/LCP layers. In a first step, a first LPP layer 3 is jet-printed on a certain area 68 of a substrate 2. The substrate material can be chosen as in the first embodiment.

After the drying process, the first layer 3 is then exposed to linear polarized UV light as described below (the polarization direction 17 is for instance perpendicular to the long edge of the substrate 2). Then, a second LPP layer 43 is jet-printed on an area 69 of the substrate 2 different from the area 68 of the first alignment layer 3. The second LPP layer 43 may have a different shape compared to the first LPP layer 3. After the drying process, the second LPP layer 43 is then exposed to linear polarized UV light as described below (the polarization direction 15 is for instance parallel to the long edge of the substrate 2).

Then, these two LPP layers 3 and 43 are jet-printed with LCP material such that different thickness d_2 and d_1 of the LCP layers 4 and 44 result. When the solvent is evaporated from the LCP solution, the liquid crystal molecules align according to the alignment information of the two LPP layers 3 and 43. A cross-linkage as described below then forms a solid state plastic film.

20

As shown in Fig. 7, on top of the LCP area 44 a further LPP layer is jet-printed to form the third LPP area 53. After the drying process, the third LPP layer 53 is then exposed to linear polarized UV light as described below (the polarization direction 17 is say perpendicular to the long edge of the substrate 2). Then, a further LPP layer 63 is jet-printed onto the LCP layer 4. The further LPP layer 63 may have a different shape compared to the LPP layers 3, 43 and 53. After the drying process, the further LPP layer 63 is then exposed to linear polarized UV light as described below (the polarization direction 18 is say 135 degrees to the long edge of the substrate 2). Then these two LPP layers 53 and 63, not contacting the substrate 2, are jet-printed with LCP material

30

such that different thickness d_3 and d_4 of the LCP layers 64 and 74 result. When the solvent is evaporated from the LCP solution, the liquid crystal molecules align according to the alignment information of the two LPP layers 53 and 63 or - if no LPP layer is present as in area 67 - according the adjacent LCP layer 44 below. In Fig. 7, this happens with the left part of the LCP area 64. Normally, the LPP layer thickness (around 50 nm) is much smaller than the thickness of the optically active LCP layer. Thus, in Fig. 7 the thickness d_3 of the LCP layer 64 is depicted only with one thickness instead of correctly two. On the right side of area 68 there is no second LPP/LCP layer and therefore this area 66 consists of only one LPP/LCP layer. A cross-linkage as described below forms then a solid state plastic film. This terminates the manufacturing process of the optical structured LPP/LCP device 61. The information can be visualized with one or two linear polarizer(s), one polarizer for reflective devices, two polarizers for transmissive devices.

The optical devices 61 manufactured as shown in Fig. 7 and described above may show very complex color patterns. By rotating the polarizer or the device the image changes from positive to negative or from one color pattern to its complementary color counterpart. The process described in this embodiment allows the manufacturing of complex optical devices such as e.g. sophisticated optical structured security elements or specific interference color filters.

Fig. 8 shows schematically the set-up of a sixth embodiment which consists of a topographically complex orientation pattern including one (76) or more (77) LPP/LCP layers combined with dichroic and/or cholesteric liquid crystal layers. In a first step, a first LPP layer 3 is jet-printed on a substrate 2. The substrate material can be chosen as in the first embodiment. In

case of cholesteric layers, a light absorbing dark background leads to better reflective properties for one mode of circularly polarized light, whereas the other mode is substantially absorbed. After the drying process, the first layer 3 is exposed to linear polarized UV light as described below (the polarization direction 18 is say 135 degrees to the long edge of the substrate 2). Then, a second LPP layer 43 is jet-printed beside the first alignment layer 3. The second LPP layer 43 may have a different shape compared to the first LPP layer 3. After the drying process, the second LPP layer 43 is then exposed to linear polarized UV light as described below (the polarization direction 15 is say parallel to the long edge of the substrate 2). Then, these two LPP layers 3 and 43 are jet-printed with LCP material such that different thicknesses d_1 and d_2 of the LCP layers 84 and 4 result. According to Fig. 8, the LCP layer 84 is a dichroic layer, which means that the LCP layer 84 contains dichroic dyes as described below. The dichroic dyes may be cross-linkable. When the solvent is evaporated from the LCP solution, the liquid crystal molecules align according to the alignment information of the two LPP layers 3 and 43. A cross-linkage as described below forms then a solid state plastic film.

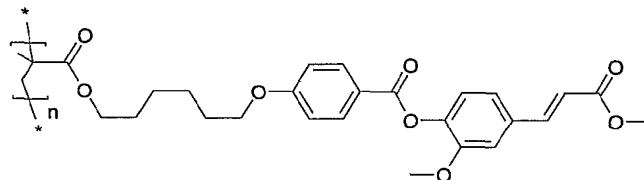
As shown in Fig. 8, on top of the LCP area 84 further LPP material is jet-printed to form the LPP area 53. After the drying process, the LPP layer 53 is exposed to linear polarized UV light as described below (the polarization direction 17 is say perpendicular to the long edge of the substrate 2). Then, the LPP layer 53 and part of the LCP layers 4 and 84 are jet-printed with LCP material such that different thicknesses d_3 and d_4 of LCP layers 64 and 74 result. According to Fig. 8, the LCP layer 74 consists of a cholesteric liquid crystal layer with a specific pitch. The manufacturing process of such a cholesteric

layer is described below. When the solvent is evaporated from the LCP solutions, the liquid crystal molecules align according to the alignment information of the LPP layer 53 or - if no LPP layer is present as on LCP layer 4 and on LCP layer 84 in area 5 77 - according to the adjacent LCP layer 84 below. Normally, the LPP layer thickness (around 50 nm) is much smaller than the thickness of the optically active LCP layer. Thus, in Fig. 8 the thickness d_3 of the LCP layer 64 is depicted only with one thickness instead of correctly two. A cross-linkage as described 10 below forms then a solid state plastic film. Then, a further LPP layer 63 is jet-printed onto the cholesteric LCP layer 74 and, after drying, exposed to linear polarized UV light (with the polarization direction 17 perpendicular to the long edge of the substrate 2). The LPP layer 63 is then jet-printed with LCP 15 material to form an LCP layer 94. A cross-linkage as described below then forms a solid state plastic film. This terminates the manufacturing process of the optical structured LPP/LCP device 71.

20 The complex information can be visualized with one or two linear polarizer(s), one polarizer for reflective devices, two polarizers for transmissive devices. The optical devices 71 described in this embodiment may show very complex color patterns. By rotating the polarizer or the device the image 25 changes from positive to negative or from one color pattern to its complementary color counterpart. The process described in this embodiment again shows the possibility of manufacturing complex and sophisticated optical devices.

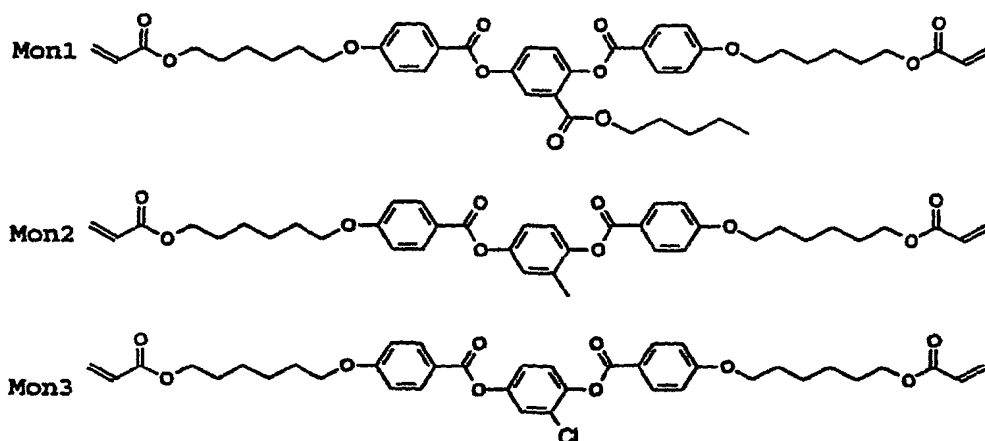
30 For the production of the LPP layers, suitable LPP materials are known to a person skilled in the art. Examples are for instance described in patent publications EP-A-0 611 786, WO-96/10049 and EP-A-0 763 552. They include cinnamic acid derivatives and

ferulic acid derivatives. For the examples described above, the following LPP material



was used as a 10 percent solution in a solvent mixture of MEK (methyl-ethyl ketone) and ethyl acetate (ratio MEK : ethyl acetate = 1:1). The viscosity was between 2 and 4 mPas. Depending on the type of ink-jet printing head used also higher viscosity up to about 80 cP are possible. The layers were exposed to linearly polarized light from a mercury high-pressure lamp for 10 to 550 seconds (depending on the strength of the lamp and on the characteristics of LPP and LCP layers) at room temperature.

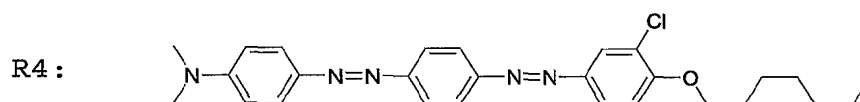
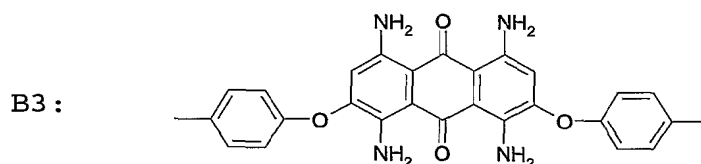
For the production of the LCP layers, in the examples the following cross-linkable liquid crystal diacrylate components



were used in a supercoolable nematic mixture (Mon1 80 %, Mon2 15 %, Mon3 5 %) having a particularly low melting point ($T_m \sim 35^\circ\text{C}$) thus making it possible to prepare the LCP layer at room temperature. The mixture was dissolved in MEK. If required,

well-known additives may also be present, such as e.g. phenol derivatives for stabilisation or photoinitiators like Irgacure®. By means of varying the concentration, it was possible to adjust the LCP layer thickness over a wide range leading to different optical retardations (e.g. about $\lambda/4$ to $\lambda/2$ for almost black and white devices for reflective mode or transmissive mode respectively) of the LCP retarder layers. For cross-linking the liquid crystal monomers, the layers were exposed to isotropic light from a xenon lamp in an inert atmosphere.

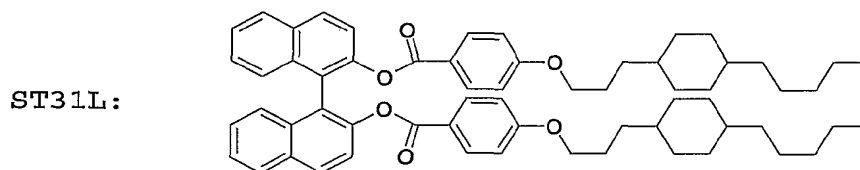
For the production of the dichroic LCP layers, the nematic mixture of cross-linkable liquid crystal diacrylate components as described above was used, additionally containing one or more dichroic dyes. As dichroic dyes, the mixture contained for instance a blue anthraquinone dye B3 and a red azo dye R4 (structures see below) in concentration 2 weight% and 1 weight% respectively.



By means of varying the concentration in a solvent such as MEK, it was possible to adjust the LCP layer thickness over a wide range leading to different extinction values of the dichroic polarizer.

For the production of the cholesteric LCP layers, a procedure similar to that of the nematic LCP layer was used. However, the nematic mixture was additionally doped with cholesteric material inducing a pitch. A suitable chiral dopant was e.g. ST31L which

shows a left-handed helical sense.



The concentration of the chiral dopant was 4 % to 9 %, more preferable 5 % to 6 %. This induces the desired reflective wavelength band in the visible range, but by changing the concentration also reflective wavelength bands in the UV or IR range can be realized. By means of varying the concentration in a solvent such as MEK, it was possible to adjust the cholesteric LCP layer thickness over a wide range leading to different reflection properties. The thickness of the cholesteric layer was 1 to 10 micrometers, depending on the wavelength range intended.

The optical effects described above, as well as the corresponding layer structures and material compositions, represent only some of many possibilities according to the invention. They may in particular be combined in a wide variety of ways, which will be especially advantageous for the development and application of authenticating elements. Of course, any other kind of birefringent layer than the LCP layer described may also be used to produce an optical effect that can be employed in optical devices.

It is furthermore possible for the examples described above, to use not an LPP alignment layer but a different alignment layer which, according to the desired optical property and resolution, has the same or similar properties to an LPP layer. It is also conceivable to produce the orientation required for a retarder layer using a correspondingly structured substrate. A structured substrate of this type can, for example, be produced by embossing, etching and scratching.

Claims

1. A method for manufacturing a liquid crystal polymer network (1) having a pattern structure, comprising the steps

- providing a substrate (2);
- jet printing a first alignment layer (3), which comprises a material to which an aligning property can be imparted by exposure to polarized light, in a first pattern onto the substrate;
- exposing the first alignment layer (3) to polarized light;
- coating the substrate (2) bearing the alignment layer with a first layer (4) comprising a cross-linkable liquid crystal material;
- allowing the liquid crystal material to align;
- and
- cross-linking the liquid crystal material.

2. The method according to claim 1, wherein, before the step of coating with the first layer (4) comprising a cross-linkable liquid crystal material, are provided the steps

- jet printing a second alignment layer (23), which comprises a material to which an aligning property can be imparted by exposure to polarized light, in a second pattern on or beside the first alignment layer (3); and
- exposing the second alignment layer (23) to polarized light having a polarization different from the one of the polarized light to which the first alignment layer (3) was exposed.

3. A method for manufacturing a liquid crystal polymer network (1) having a pattern structure, comprising the steps

- providing a substrate (2) comprising a first alignment layer (3);

- jet printing a first layer (4) comprising a cross-linkable liquid crystal material in a first pattern;
- allowing the liquid crystal material to align;
- and
- cross-linking the liquid crystal material.

4. The method according to claim 3, wherein the first alignment layer comprises a second pattern.

5. The method according to claim 3 or 4, wherein the alignment layer (3) is a preprepared alignment layer produced through embossing, etching or scratching.

6. The method according to any one of claims 3 to 5, wherein, before the step of jet printing the first layer (4) comprising a cross-linkable liquid crystal material, are provided the steps

- jet printing a second alignment layer (23), which comprises a material to which an aligning property can be imparted by exposure to polarized light, in a second pattern on or beside the first alignment layer (3); and

- exposing the second alignment layer (23) to polarized light such that the second alignment layer (23) is oriented in a direction different to the orientation of the preprepared alignment layer (3).

7. The method according to any one of claims 3 to 6, wherein two or more layers (4 and 44) comprising a cross-linkable liquid crystal material are jet printed one beside the other.

8. The method according to any one of claims 3 to 7, wherein in a next step one or more further alignment layers (53 and 63), which comprise a material to which an aligning property can be

imparted by exposure to polarized light, are jet printed on one or more of the already existing layers (4 and 44) comprising a cross-linkable liquid crystal material and then are exposed to polarized light, and wherein subsequently one or more further layers (64 and 74) comprising a cross-linkable liquid crystal material are jet printed and then cross-linked.

9. The method according to any one of claims 1 to 8, wherein the first alignment layer (23) covers an area creating an image element and the first layer (4) comprising a cross-linkable liquid crystal material covers a bigger area encompassing at least said image element.

10. The method according to any one of claims 1 to 8, wherein the first layer (54) comprising a cross-linkable liquid crystal material covers an area creating an image element on the first alignment layer (33) covering a bigger area encompassing at least said image element.

11. The method according to any one of claims 1 to 10, wherein data representing the first, second and further pattern are stored in a memory of a computer system (7) and wherein the computer system (7) is controlling the jet printing process of distribution of alignment layer material and cross-linkable liquid crystal material onto the substrate (2) and further layers.

12. The method according to any one of claims 1 to 11, wherein at least one alignment layer (3) is a layer containing a linearly photopolymerisable material.

13. The method according to any one of claims 1 to 12, wherein the polarized light to which the alignment layer is or

the alignment layers are exposed is linearly or elliptically polarized.

14. The method according to any one of claims 1 to 13, wherein at least one layer (84) comprising a cross-linkable liquid crystal material is additionally comprising one or more dichroic dyes.

15. The method according to any one of claims 1 to 14, wherein the jet printing is a piezo jet printing method.

16. The method according to any one of claims 1 to 14, wherein the jet printing is a bubble jet printing method.

17. An optical device comprising a liquid crystal polymer network (1) having a pattern structure manufactured according to any one of claims 1 to 16.

18. An optical device according to claim 17, which is an optical security device.

1/8

Fig. 1

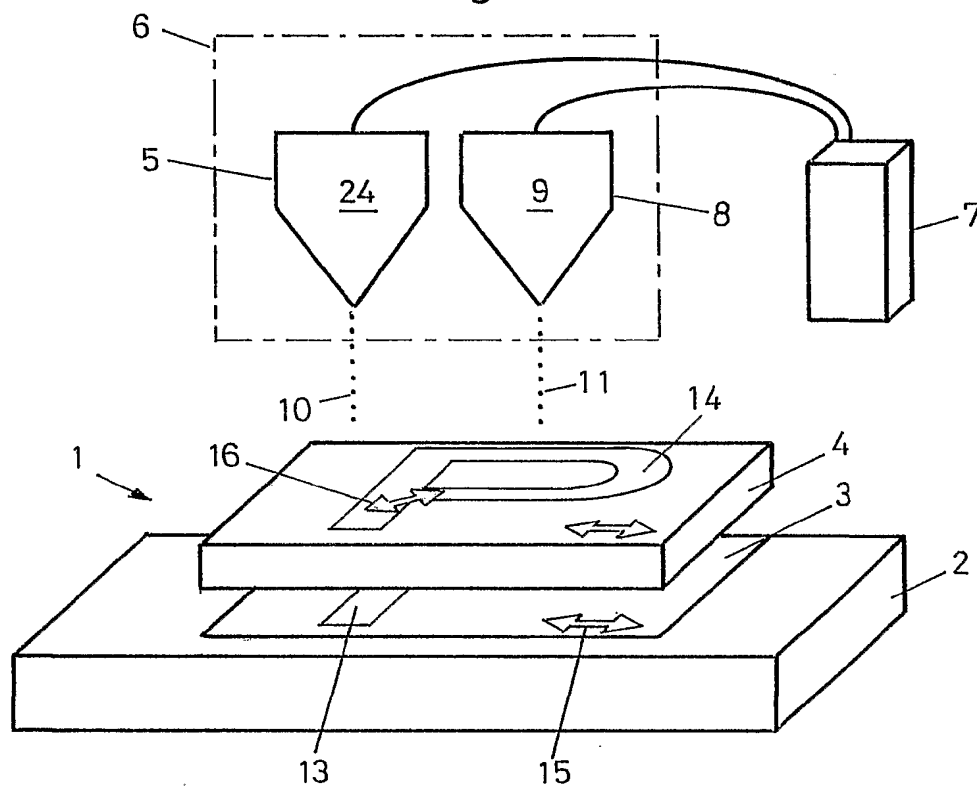


Fig. 2

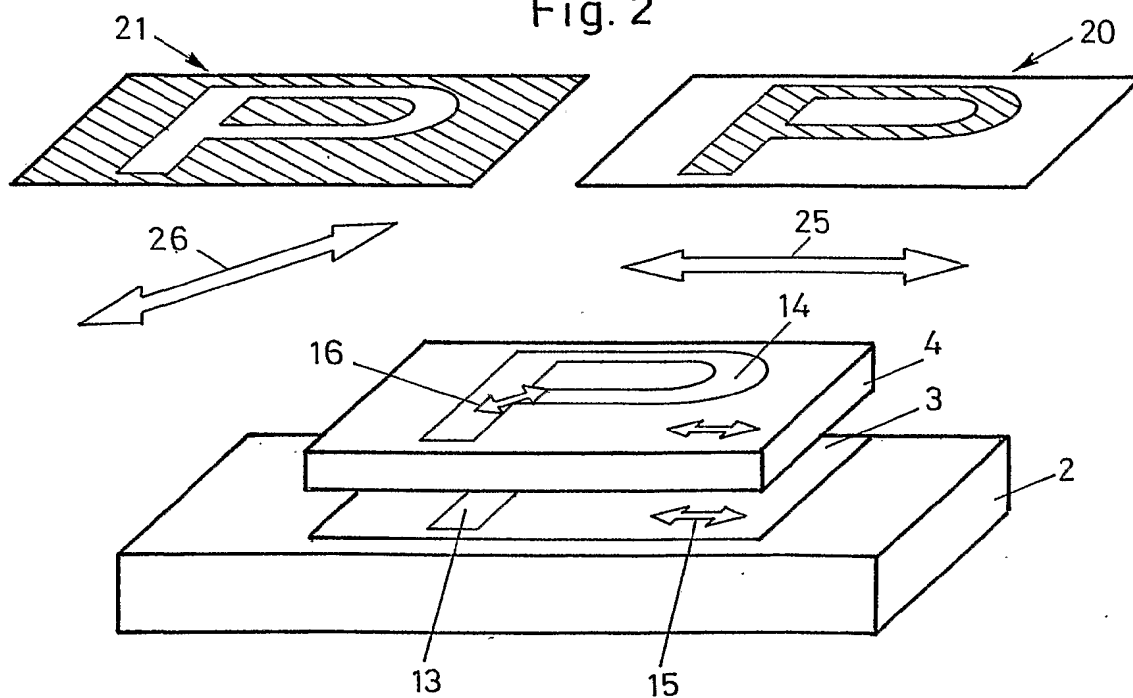


Fig. 3a

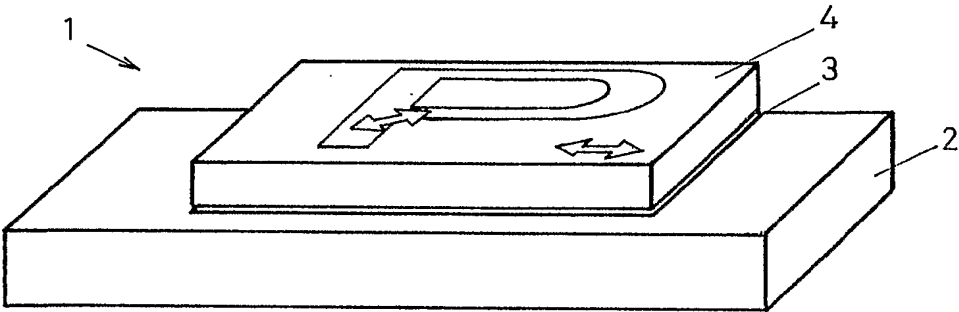


Fig. 3b

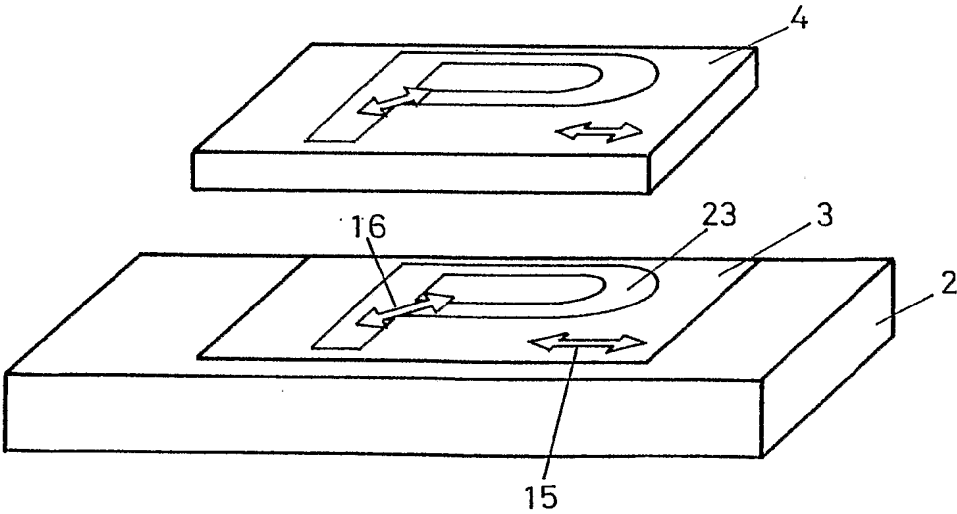


Fig. 4a

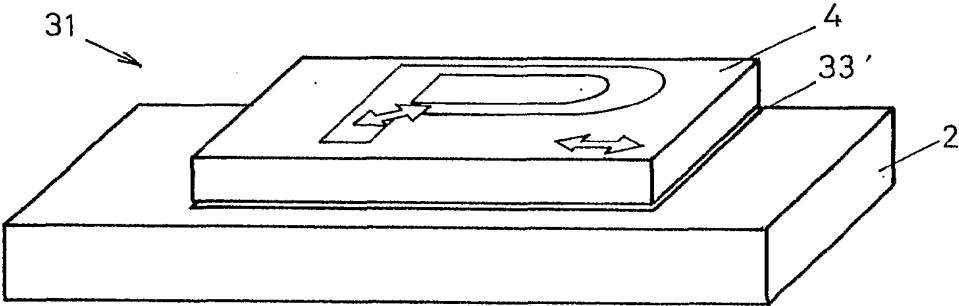


Fig. 4b

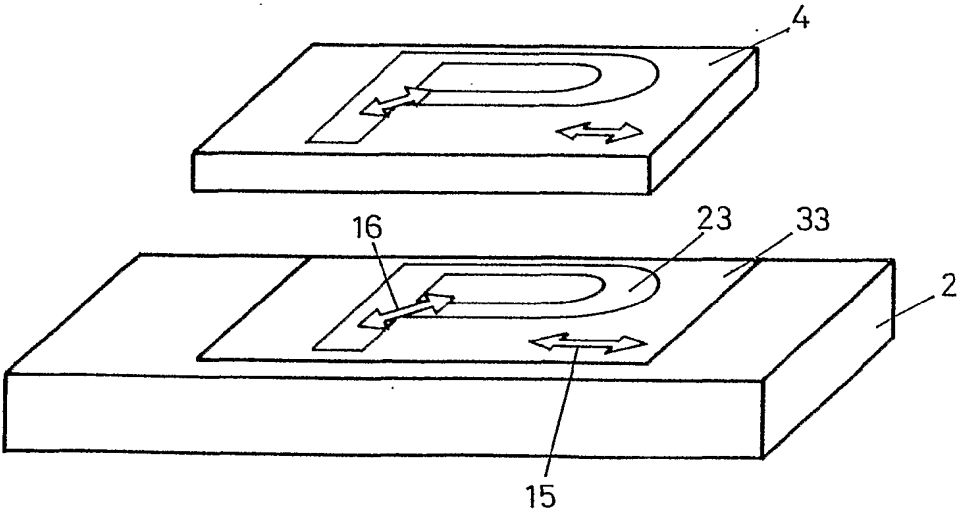


Fig. 5a

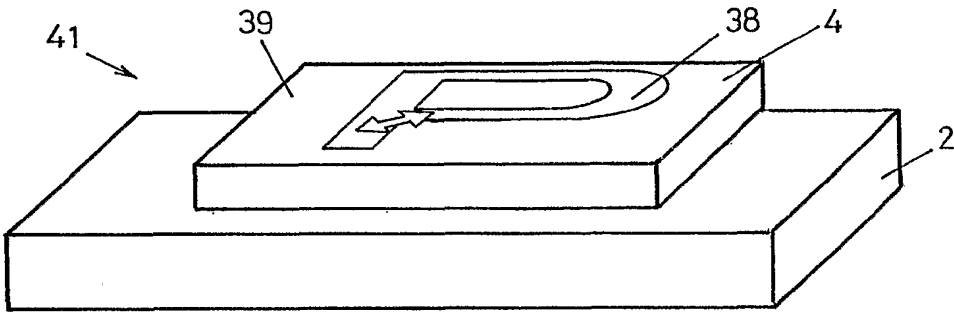
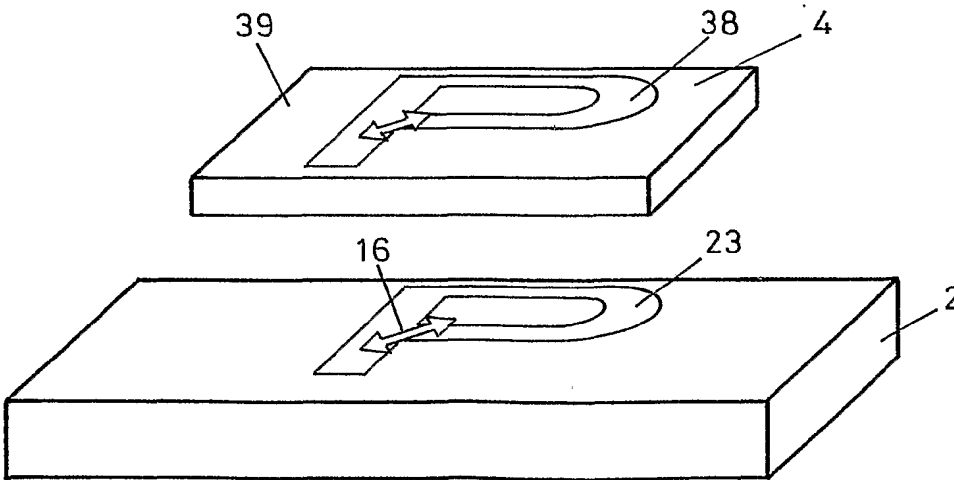


Fig. 5b



5 / 8

Fig. 6a

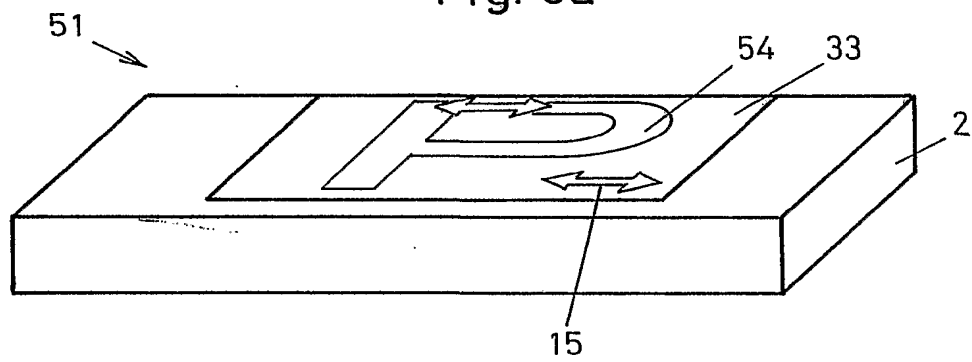


Fig. 6b

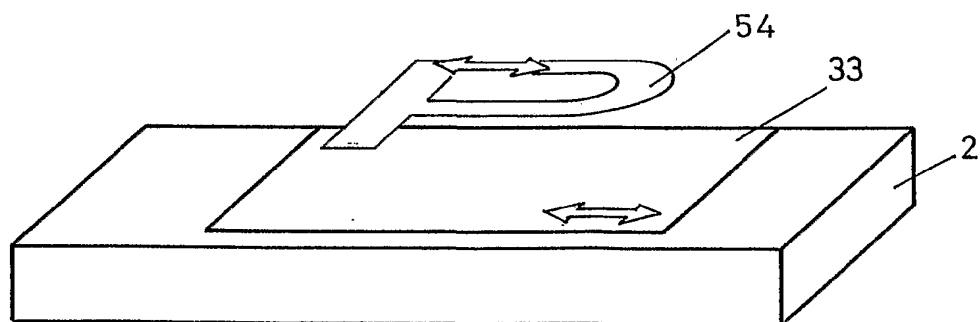


Fig. 7

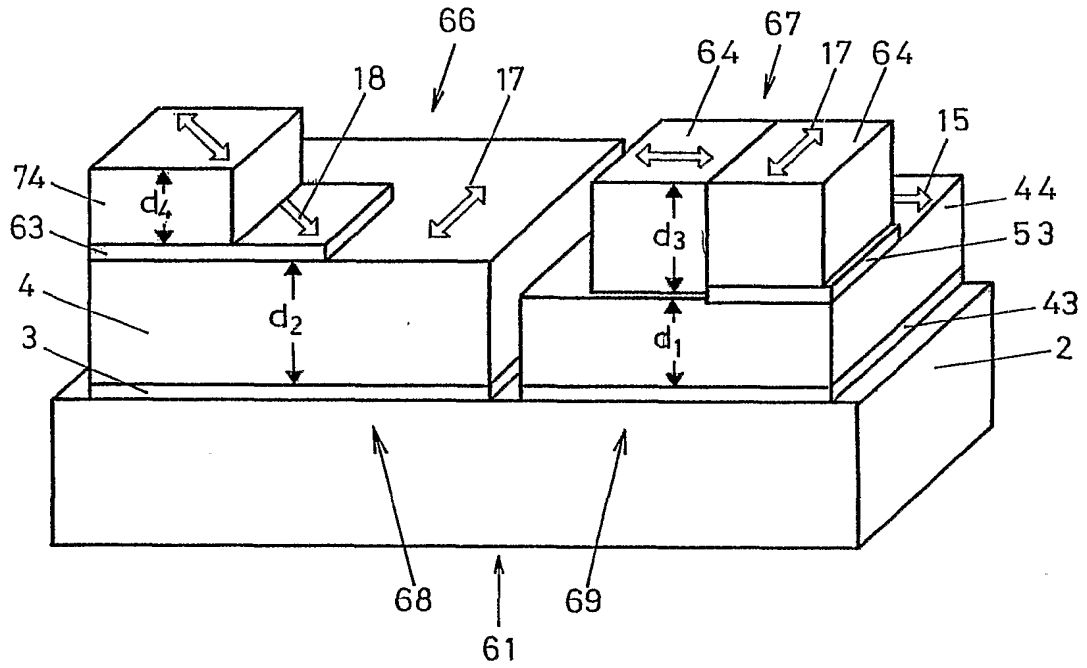


Fig. 8

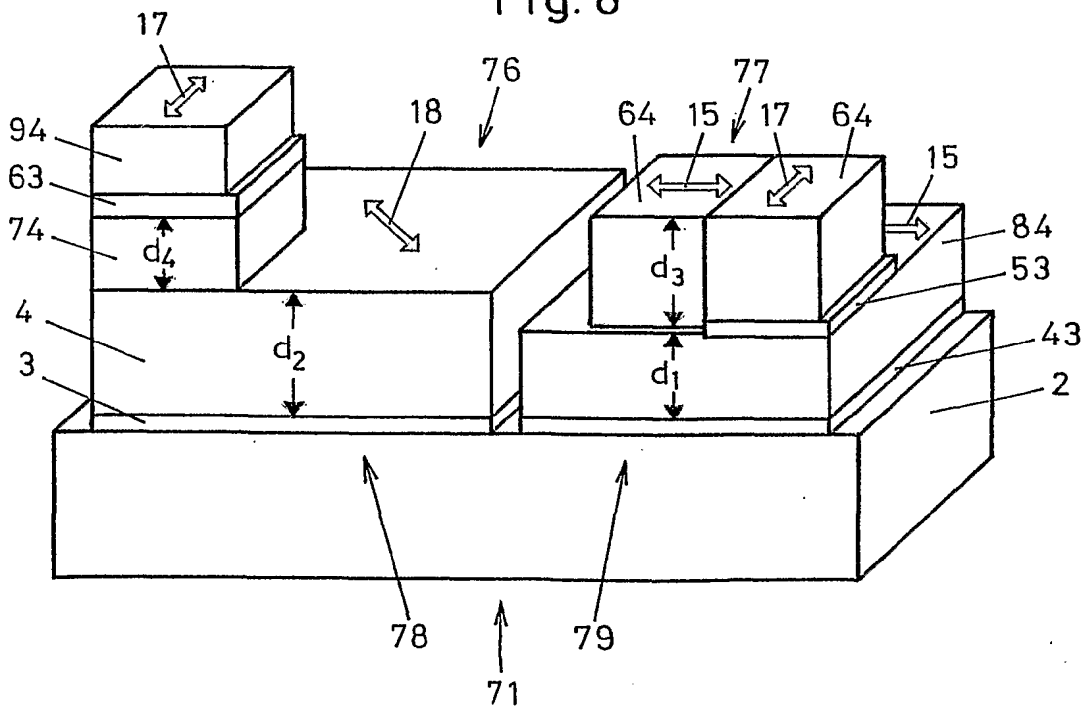


Fig. 9

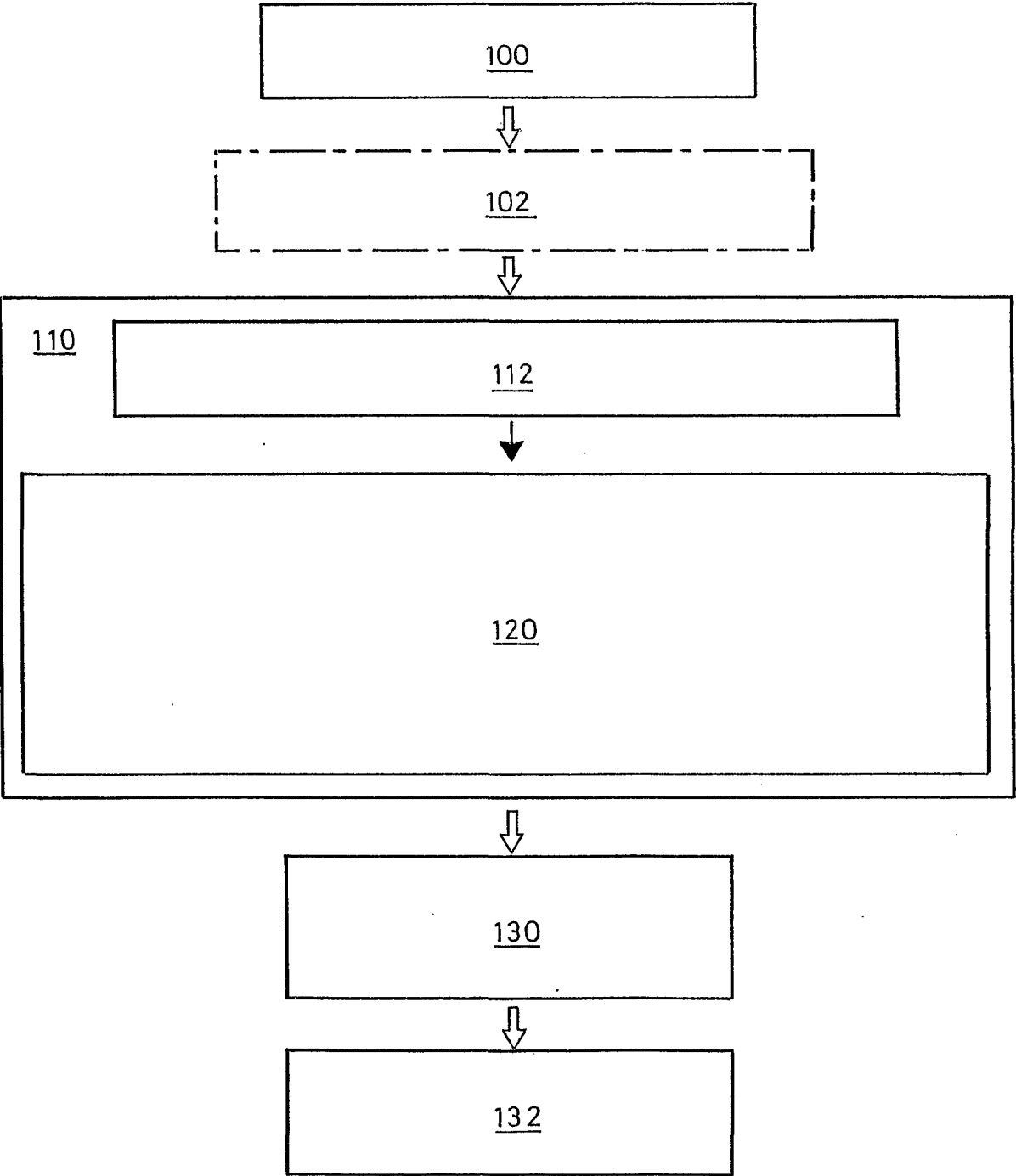
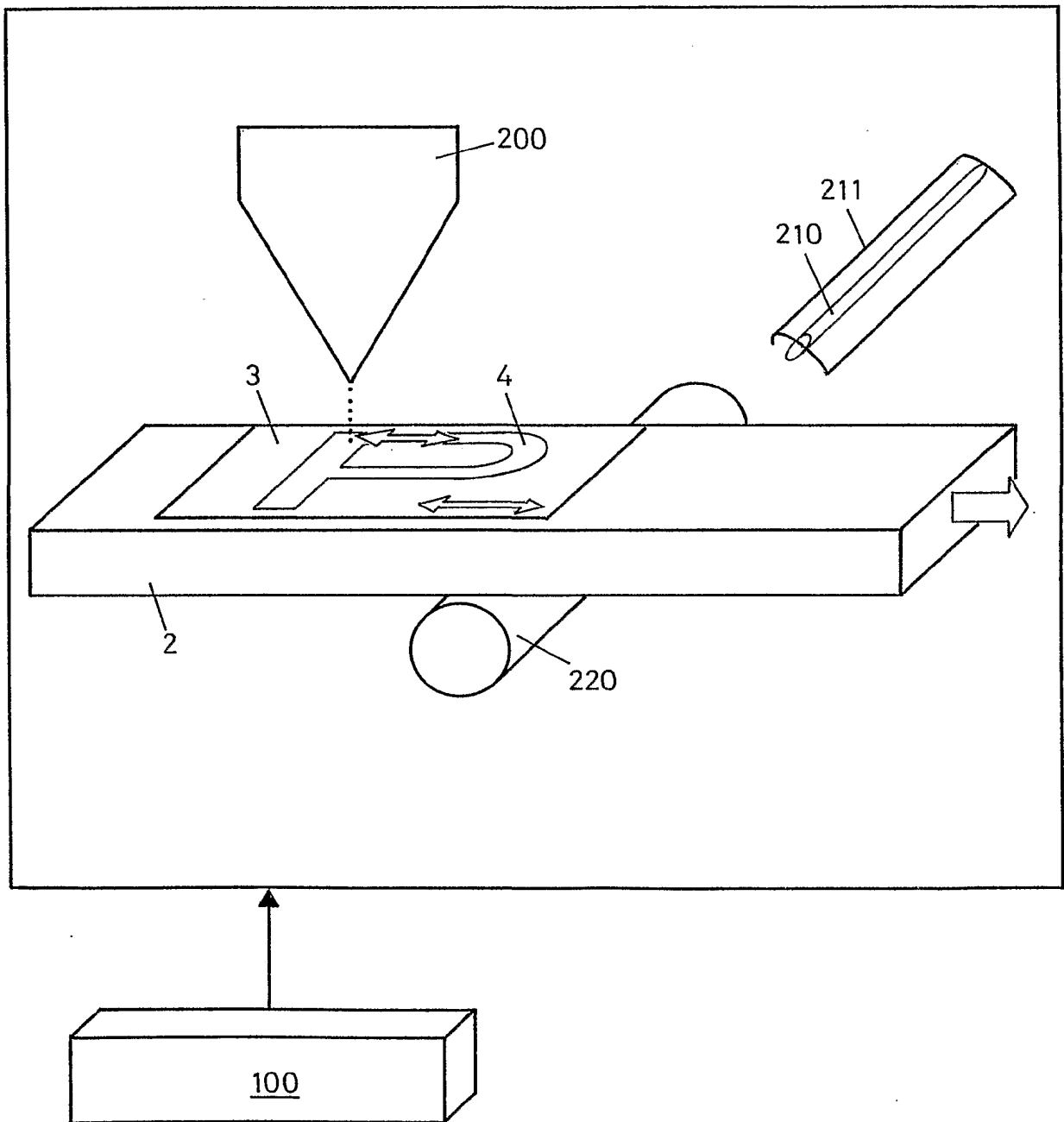


Fig. 10



INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International Application No

PCT/CH 02/00043

A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER

IPC 7 G02B5/30 B42D15/00 G06K19/06 G02F1/1334

According to International Patent Classification (IPC) or to both national classification and IPC

B. FIELDS SEARCHED

Minimum documentation searched (classification system followed by classification symbols)

IPC 7 G02B B42D G06K G02F

Documentation searched other than minimum documentation to the extent that such documents are included in the fields searched

Electronic data base consulted during the international search (name of data base and, where practical, search terms used)

EPO-Internal, COMPENDEX

C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category *	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
Y	SCHADT M ET AL: "PHOTO-INDUCED ALIGNMENT AND PATTERNING OF HYBRID LIQUID CRYSTALLINE POLYMER FILMS ON SINGLE SUBSTRATES" JAPANESE JOURNAL OF APPLIED PHYSICS, JP, PUBLICATION OFFICE JAPANESE JOURNAL OF APPLIED PHYSICS. TOKYO, vol. 34, no. 6B, 15 June 1995 (1995-06-15), pages L764-L767, XP000578770 ISSN: 0021-4922 the whole document	1, 2, 12-14
Y	EP 0 689 065 A (HOFFMANN LA ROCHE) 27 December 1995 (1995-12-27) page 3, line 8 - line 10 -/-	1, 2, 12, 13



Further documents are listed in the continuation of box C.



Patent family members are listed in annex.

* Special categories of cited documents:

- *A* document defining the general state of the art which is not considered to be of particular relevance
- *E* earlier document but published on or after the international filing date
- *L* document which may throw doubts on priority claim(s) or which is cited to establish the publication date of another citation or other special reason (as specified)
- *O* document referring to an oral disclosure, use, exhibition or other means
- *P* document published prior to the international filing date but later than the priority date claimed

- *T* later document published after the international filing date or priority date and not in conflict with the application but cited to understand the principle or theory underlying the invention
- *X* document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered novel or cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is taken alone
- *Y* document of particular relevance; the claimed invention cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the document is combined with one or more other such documents, such combination being obvious to a person skilled in the art.
- *&* document member of the same patent family

Date of the actual completion of the international search

8 May 2002

Date of mailing of the international search report

16/05/2002

Name and mailing address of the ISA

European Patent Office, P.B. 5818 Patentlaan 2
NL - 2280 HV Rijswijk
Tel. (+31-70) 340-2040, Tx. 31 651 epo nl,
Fax: (+31-70) 340-3016

Authorized officer

Diot, P

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International Application No

PCT/CH 02/00043

C.(Continuation) DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT		
Category *	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
A	<p>MOIA FRANCO ET AL: "Optical LPP/LCP devices: a new generation of optical security elements"</p> <p>OPTICAL SECURITY AND COUNTERFEIT DETERRENCE TECHNIQUES III; SAN JOSE, CA, USA JAN 27-JAN 28 2000, vol. 3973, 2000, pages 196-203, XP008003043</p> <p>Proc SPIE Int Soc Opt Eng; Proceedings of SPIE - The International Society for Optical Engineering 2000 Society of Photo-Optical Instrumentation Engineers, Bellingham, WA, USA</p> <p>the whole document</p>	1,3-5, 12,13, 17,18
Y	<p>US 5 798 147 A (SCHUHMACHER PETER ET AL)</p> <p>25 August 1998 (1998-08-25)</p> <p>column 18, line 15 -column 20, line 65</p>	3
A	<p>US 5 796 458 A (SASABAYASHI TAKASHI ET AL) 18 August 1998 (1998-08-18)</p> <p>column 19, line 34 - line 36</p>	1
Y	<p>EP 0 880 052 A (SHARP KK)</p> <p>25 November 1998 (1998-11-25)</p> <p>column 3, line 36 -column 4, line 56</p>	3
A	<p>US 4 002 404 A (DIR GARY A)</p> <p>11 January 1977 (1977-01-11)</p> <p>column 3, line 41 -column 4, line 49</p>	1
A	<p>US 5 773 178 A (SHIOTA ATSUSHI ET AL)</p> <p>30 June 1998 (1998-06-30)</p> <p>column 2, line 12 -column 5, line 61</p>	1,3
A	<p>WO 98 44382 A (FERGASON JAMES L)</p> <p>8 October 1998 (1998-10-08)</p> <p>page 30, line 08 -page 33, line 18</p>	1,3
A	<p>WO 99 64924 A (SCHADT MARTIN ;ROLIC AG (CH); SEIBERLE HUBERT (DE))</p> <p>16 December 1999 (1999-12-16)</p>	1,3
Y	<p>column 2, line 16 -column 3, line 15</p>	14
A	<p>WO 99 19900 A (PATTERNING TECHNOLOGIES LTD ;SPEAKMAN STUART (GB); THIN FILM TECHN)</p> <p>22 April 1999 (1999-04-22)</p> <p>page 43, line 01 -page 48, line 30</p>	1,3

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

Information on patent family members

International Application No

PCT/CH 02/00043

Patent document cited in search report		Publication date	Patent family member(s)	Publication date
EP 0689065	A	27-12-1995	CN 1116754 A	14-02-1996
			DE 59509361 D1	02-08-2001
			EP 0689065 A1	27-12-1995
			JP 8043804 A	16-02-1996
			KR 258401 B1	01-06-2000
			US 6144428 A	07-11-2000
US 5798147	A	25-08-1998	DE 4441651 A1	25-04-1996
			DE 19532419 A1	06-03-1997
			AT 178636 T	15-04-1999
			BR 9510303 A	11-11-1997
			CN 1166851 A	03-12-1997
			CZ 9701529 A3	17-06-1998
			DE 59505609 D1	12-05-1999
			WO 9602597 A2	01-02-1996
			EP 0793693 A2	10-09-1997
			ES 2130680 T3	01-07-1999
			JP 10508882 T	02-09-1998
US 5796458	A	18-08-1998	JP 6082784 A	25-03-1994
			JP 3100473 B2	16-10-2000
			JP 6082785 A	25-03-1994
			JP 2914851 B2	05-07-1999
			JP 6222366 A	12-08-1994
			US 5629056 A	13-05-1997
EP 0880052	A	25-11-1998	GB 2325530 A	25-11-1998
			EP 0880052 A2	25-11-1998
			JP 10325955 A	08-12-1998
			US 6128058 A	03-10-2000
US 4002404	A	11-01-1977	NONE	
US 5773178	A	30-06-1998	JP 10100247 A	21-04-1998
WO 9844382	A	08-10-1998	AU 6785598 A	22-10-1998
			WO 9844382 A1	08-10-1998
			US 6204900 B1	20-03-2001
WO 9964924	A	16-12-1999	AU 4053199 A	30-12-1999
			CN 1304496 T	18-07-2001
			EP 1090325 A1	11-04-2001
			WO 9964924 A1	16-12-1999
WO 9919900	A	22-04-1999	GB 2330451 A	21-04-1999
			GB 2330331 A	21-04-1999
			AU 9451098 A	03-05-1999
			CA 2306384 A1	22-04-1999
			EP 1027723 A2	16-08-2000
			WO 9919900 A2	22-04-1999